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TEACHING AND LEARNING IN NURSING EDUCATION :
A CRITICAL APPROACH

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RGON MA

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ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates tutors' and students' experiences of teaching and learning nursing during the final year of one three year comprehensive (polytechnic) nursing course. The use of critical social science exposes for critique the ways in which sociopolitical forces constrain individual and professional action. The critical reflexive analysis of the perceptions of nine tutors and thirty eight students illustrate the ways in which dominant ideologies embedded in the social practices of nursing education and health care shape the consciousness of tutors and students towards conformity, compliance and passivity.

Although previous studies provide useful descriptions of socialisation and educational processes, they overlook the importance of the reflexivity of understanding and action, and of the structural constraints in nursing education and practice. By focussing on either individual agency and deficiencies, or on bureaucratic conditions of education and practice, previous studies directed attention away from generating the political knowledge which may have assisted nurses to overcome some of the contradictory and constraining conditions of their practice.

It is the political processes of teaching and learning and their practical effects which are revealed for critique and transformation using a critical reflexive methodology. It is claimed that this methodology motivates research participants themselves to become aware that their preconceptions are shaped by aspects of the prevailing social order such that they are prevented from achieving their nursing ideals and educational goals. Thus, through the processes involved in becoming socially critical, tutors and students would be able to transform those sociopolitical

constraints. Although collective political action is not fully demonstrated in the time frame of this study, it is suggested that engaging in this research has had ongoing liberating effects for the participants.

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